

S. Lyons Esq

Heathfield Dec<sup>r</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> 1797

Dear Sir

Your letter of 23 I rec<sup>d</sup> at Bristol which prevented me answering sooner.

The best white Copal oil varnish does not readily crack unless much bent, or exposed to the sun, but is apt to grow somewhat yellow, though regularly so. There are several kinds of it, called cabinet varnish, cheise or coach varnish &c. It is sold at Millands near St Anns Soho, at Wells in Long Acre, at Delights in Bridge Street Blackfriars & other shops. I have got some good at Delights, but do not remember the particular name of it. They can probably tell you at the shops which will suit you. I have also seen a spirit Copal varnish called Balsam Copal varnish sold at Reeves's colour shop, which is well spoken of, I believe the same varnish is sold at Delights, Reeves's was extravagantly dear. There is a beautifully white spirit Copal varnish made by my friend Mr Hurry of Manchester & sold in London, though I know not where, probably by those who sell his calcined magnesia. It is almost colourless, not much disposed to grow yellow & possesses considerable ductility, though probably not so much as the oil varnishes, the price is about 4/- for a crystal bottle of about 16 ounces.

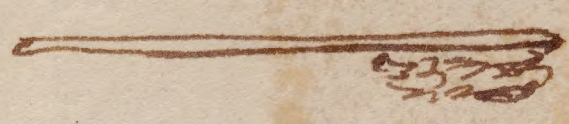
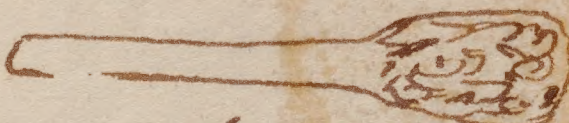
All of these varnishes require that the paper should be



should be first prepared with Seinglass size or fine  
Clear Starch to prevent the varnish sinking into the  
paper, I prefer the Seinglass as more pliable & more  
clear, it must be laid on hot & care taken not to  
spread the colour in laying it on, practice is necessary  
for this, probably going over the drawing with a dilute  
solution of sandarac in sp. wine may secure the colours  
from spreading with the size, but this wash should  
be thin, as sandarac makes a brittle varnish if  
thick. The Spirit varnishes should be used warm say  
about  $90^{\circ}$  & the room should be of the same warmth  
otherwise they will chill & lose opacity, Camels hair  
tools are commonly used for laying them on with,  
each coat should be thoroughly dry before another is  
laid on & to make varnish beautiful very little should  
be laid on at a time, that is each coat should  
be very thin. The same rule holds good with the oil  
varnishes, which when you buy them are generally too  
thick & should be diluted with about their own bulk  
of best sp. of Turpentine, say fresh distilled oil of  
Turpentine. I have commonly used a Ground Hog  
hair tool for laying them on, such tools you  
can get at Delights, I bore a hole through a large  
Cork with a hot Iron, through which I put the  
handle of the brush tight, then fit the cork to a wide  
mouthed vessel in which there is a quantity of varnish  
& by this means the brush is always in the varnish  
which keeps it in order & saves reaching it  
thus





I have also with much advantage used a piece of fine sponge glued to a piece of wood   
for the spirit varnishes, which lay on   
the varnish more evenly & less at a time than the brushes & leaves no hairs behind it

If your friends are not practiced varnishers I advise them to begin by trying their hand upon such things as they have not much regard for as probably they may not succeed at once, there being many little attentions necessary which practice only can teach, mean while I shall be glad if what I have said can be of any use to you or to your friends

Having been out of the world this long time I have heard nothing of your Dorsetshire antiquities which when I come to London I shall be happy to see, but if that should not happen before you set out on your travels It will give Mrs W. & myself much pleasure to see you here where we have a bed at your service

Mrs W. joins me in best wishes & remains

Dear Sir

Yours sincerely

James Watt



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John July - 1804

To B. Fulton

Written by James Watt